

BIBLICAL HOSPITALITY AND IMMIGRATION: A WESLEYAN-HOLINESS APPROACH TO THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

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Introduction

Immigration is often seen as a societal problem. The church has many times raised its voice about what to do, how to react, how to protect people, and what our mission is towards those who are escaping from one place due to political reasons, war, economic crisis, famine, or similar reasons. Many countries around the world are currently suffering such a crisis, with massive movements of people from one country to another. According to a United Nations report, the top five countries from which people migrate are India with 18 million, Mexico with 11 million, Russia with 10.8 million, China with 10 million, and the Syrian Arab Republic with more than 8 million. The top five countries that host immigrants are the United States of America, with over 50 million, followed by Germany, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates, with ranks between nine and sixteen million people.¹

Given those numbers, little is said about the situation in Latin America, where countries such as Peru, Chile, and Colombia host people from countries like Venezuela, Haiti, and Cuba, creating among the host population a mixed sense of anger, compassion, sorrow, or abandonment. Even though the major mass movements ended years ago, many people still remain at the borders as they seek to escape from one place to another, looking for better options to live.

The biggest example of migration in Latin America is Venezuela. By the end of 2025, more than 7 million Venezuelans were living in countries around the world. However, 85 percent of them are in South America, creating this issue as the “biggest crisis in the region ever.” Colombia has the largest number of refugees, with almost three million, followed by Peru with 1.5 million.²

This mass migration, called the *El Éxodo Venezolano* (the Venezuelan Exodus), is considerably larger than the exodus from Syria, for instance, and has reached more than six million migrants in a period of five to six years, or larger than Myanmar, with more than one million immigrants, but in a period of ten years.³

Responses from people in countries that have received Venezuelans vary. On the one hand, people have reacted positively due to historical reasons. Around twenty years ago, Venezuela was a prosperous country. People from Peru migrated to Venezuela to escape terrorism, as did Colombians. Alejandro Medina says that when Venezuela was prosperous, no one wanted to leave the country. If ever he returned to his own country from Venezuela, it

¹ UN Migration, *World Migration Report 2022*, World Vision, accessed March 30, 2026, <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11691/files/documents/WMR-Data-Snapshot-Top-Origin-and-Destination-Countries.pdf>.

² BBC, Enero 9, 2025 “Los mapas que muestran en qué países de América Latina están los migrantes venezolanos, el mayor éxodo de la historia de la región”, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/articles/c9837v73jg4o>.

³ EFE, “Migración Venezolana,” *Portafolio*, trans. by the author. <https://www.portafolio.co/internacional/migracion-venezolana-puede-llegar-a-los-4-millones-en-el-2018-521032>.

was mainly to visit relatives, but never to stay. He says, “We arrived [in Venezuela] as migrants, we were never rejected, there was no discrimination.”⁴

On the other hand, people constantly reject what the countries are providing to Venezuelans. One example is Peru. In Lima, 55 percent of the population rejects the entrance of Venezuelans. According to *El Comercio*, one of the most important newspapers of the country, Peruvians consider that Venezuelans are taking away their jobs. By accepting work at a wage below the legal minimum, businesses are hiring Venezuelans to do the jobs that Peruvians were doing before. Some people see this as an opportunity to help a foreigner in need, but others, especially those with family members unable to find jobs, see it as negative.⁵

During this time of crisis, I have seen the responses of many Christians on social media, in the news, and even on television. However, their responses are not equal. Some believe it is the government’s responsibility to help, while others claim it is the church’s opportunity to act, but their responses end with raising their voices rather than taking action.

In an era defined by unprecedented human mobility around the world, the church is constantly confronted with the theological and practical implications of migration. This is no longer a minor issue. Migration has become a central point for missiological reflection, particularly in Latin America, where constant instability and economic inconsistency exist. Within this context, the Church of the Nazarene faces the pressing challenge of articulating a missiology that is contextually relevant as well as theologically faithful.

A tension exists between contextualization and fidelity. This tension leads to the serious issue regarding migrants. On the one hand, the church is called to symbolize or represent the gospel in ways that are intelligible and meaningful within diverse cultural and social realities. On the other hand, its mission must be anchored in the normative authority of Scripture with a vision that characterizes the Wesleyan tradition. In this pursuit, to what extent should contextualization shape the church’s missional engagement with migrants without compromising the integrity of the gospel? While looking at some biblical and theological precepts related to holiness, this paper asks how the *missio Dei* can be applied to the contexts of migration. In particular, are there limits in the way the Church of the Nazarene’s mission responds to migrants, not just as recipients of ministry but as active participants in God’s redemptive work?

Biblical and Theological Perspectives of Hospitality

The Bible, in both the New and the Old Testament, provides examples of how we should respond to foreigners. In the Old Testament, Leviticus 19:33–34 says, “When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (NIV). Joe M. Sprinkle says that the Israelites were to treat the foreigner “decently” regardless of the pagan practices they carried to their land. Love should overcome all. There was to be a sense of “empathy” from the Israelites,

⁴ Sally Palomino, “En Venezuela se Vivía tan Bien, Que Era un País del que Nadie se Quería Ir” trans. By the author, https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/04/01/colombia/1490999234_665682.html.

⁵ Fernando Orbezo, “Venezolanos en Perú: el 55% de Limeños No Está De Acuerdo Con La Llegada De Migrante,” trans. By the author, <https://elcomercio.pe/peru/55-limenos-acuerdo-llegada-migrantes-venezolanos-noticia-561949>.

based on their experience in Egypt. The command is clear, and it can be compared with the parable of the Good Samaritan in the New Testament.⁶

Likewise, in the New Testament, Hebrews 13:2 says, “Do not forget to show hospitality to immigrants, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels” (NIV). What the author conveys in his letter is “practical kindness,” which means extending the teachings of Jesus from listening to practice. There is a call to hospitality in case the Christians of that time had forgotten their responsibilities.⁷

Hospitality is a deep word; it goes beyond open doors. Hospitality is a social matter: serving people we know and are familiar with. To be hospitable is to open a space and care for those who are in need, regardless of their origin or culture. There are no longer strangers in Christ. It is the Spirit of God that creates “unity in diversity” and genuine love—a love that does not see boundaries, cultures, or race. Hospitality means to serve, and serving, as Thomas Reynolds observes, “is the hallmark of the kingdom of God,” carrying others’ burdens. Another way to understand hospitality is as a form of solidarity. The common reaction toward a stranger is fear. It has been a common trend to reject people from other countries. One reason is not knowing the culture or rejecting the customs. The Holy Spirit “turns xenophobia into philoxenia,” from fear to love of strangers.⁸

The meaning of biblical hospitality is broad and requires a lot from the individual and the church. It is a biblical mandate, not a choice. However, not all have the capacity to provide it, since factors such as economic ones seem to prevent hospitality. Still, there are other ways in which, as Christians, we are to respond to the one in need, in this case, the foreigner. Compassionate presence means relating to what the other person is suffering. When people leave their country, they carry different issues, such as pain, sorrow, and sadness. It is in times like these that Christians need to respond in an active way. The Holy Spirit, through the church, will provide relief and strength.⁹

The Wesleyan response to hospitality, however, turns out to be a little different from the ones described here. I said that hospitality is openness and giving, whether in material or spiritual support. John Wesley is not presented as a person who opened his house, but rather as a person to whom people opened their houses. Lynne Bollinger, in “Moving Beyond Homogeneity: Immigration, Wesleyan Hospitality and a Preferred Future for the Church,” argues that hospitality shifts from a “going-to” to a “coming-in” perspective. John Wesley’s hospitality is to go to the house of the needy rather than open his own house. Hospitality is received rather than given, and this opened several opportunities for evangelization. For Wesley, “reciprocity takes place as the one who offers hospitality increases in ‘lowliness, in patience, in tenderness of Spirit, in sympathy with the afflicted which you [otherwise] might not have gained.’”¹⁰

⁶ Joe M. Springle, *Teach the Text Commentary Series: Leviticus and Numbers*, eds. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015), 131.

⁷ Robert P. Gordon, *Hebrews* (Sheffield, UK: Mansion House, 2000), 163.

⁸ Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 241, 242.

⁹ Judith Allen Shelly, *Spiritual Care: A Guide for Caregivers* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2000), 74-75.

¹⁰ Lynne Bollinger, “Moving Beyond Homogeneity: Immigration, Wesleyan Hospitality and a Preferred Future for the Church,” *Didache: Faithful Teaching* 15, no.1 (2015): 6, <http://didache.nazarene.org/index.php/filedownload/didache-volumes/vol-15-1/1057-moving-beyond-homogeneity-immigration-wesleyan-hospitality-and-a-preferred-future-for-the-church-by-lynn-bollinger-2015-tom-nees-social-justice-award/file>.

Finally, I would like to address the leading and ultimate example of hospitality: Jesus. The main reason is that Jesus represents the hospitality of God through obedience and becoming human in heart. Jesus demonstrated hospitality by going to the people and interacting with the unwanted ones, the sinners. He also shared meals with the people. He sat down to listen to their stories. When persons accepted Jesus into their houses, they welcomed the Spirit of God and “became empowered by the same Spirit.” With the Spirit, they became, as well, hospitable to the stranger.¹¹

Building on the example of Jesus, Tony Merida emphasizes that Christian hospitality must move beyond theological affirmation (declaration) to an everyday practice, a practice that embodies the gospel in a relational way. Merida argues that believers are called to welcome all people, especially those who are marginalized, through personal engagement, shared meals, and presence, reflecting a ministry that is incarnational and relational rather than merely a declarative statement. Engagements also include opening one’s home (country), cultivating face-to-face interactions, extending compassion to those overlooked, and demonstrating that hospitality is not an occasional act but is a lifestyle and part of the *missio Dei*. This means that hospitality becomes a tangible expression of mission, where generosity to others is participating in God’s redemptive work by developing community, dignity, and relationships centered on the message of the gospel.¹²

Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Migration

It is important to mention that immigrants are not only passive recipients of compassion; they are participants in the mission of God. Just as today, the Bible presents certain tensions about immigrants, portraying them as a threat, such as the case presented in the book of Ezra. However, Scripture gives more attention to immigration and justice (Leviticus 23:22), equality (Numbers 15), and compassion (Deuteronomy 10:18–19). God forms, sends, and uses people in contexts of displacement to mediate blessing, preserve life, and reveal his grace across cultures. This perspective culminates in an eschatological vision where all peoples (many of them historically “strangers”) are gathered into God’s redemptive plan, affirming that migration is not incidental but deeply embedded in the unfolding of the *missio Dei*.¹³

Migration, says Frank Mathwig, is “part of the ‘*conditio humana*,’” just like birth or death. Migration is to be seen first as an anthropological phenomenon rather than a political one. Three forms or groups can be recognized. The first is a movement of people seeking employment, education, training, labor, or similar opportunities. The second is a voluntary movement, often performed by individuals with high economic privileges, seeking social, cultural, or further economic growth. Lastly, forced migration combines expulsion, human trafficking, forced labor, and war-related displacement, often driven by political, ethnic,

¹¹ Amos Yong, *Hospitality & The Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Book, 2008), 101, 106.

¹² Tony Merida, “Jesus is Our Example of Christian Hospitality,” Lifeway Christian Resources, <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/practical-ways-to-show-christian-hospitality-tony-merida-ordinary>.

¹³ Lausanne Movement, “Biblical Perspectives on the Role of Immigrants in God’s Mission (LOP 64-C),” Lausanne Movement, <https://lausanne.org/occasional-paper/biblical-perspectives-on-the-role-of-immigrants-in-gods-mission-lop-64-c>.

racial, religious, or other kinds of pressures.¹⁴ In all three forms, nonetheless, it is possible to find the *missio Dei*. God has used different people who have moved through the centuries, from Moses to Paul, and from them to missionaries sent by the church from different peoples and denominations around the world.

For Mathwig, the Bible engages migration from three perspectives. Similar to the previous list, migration is seen as a regular movement of people, a “tangible life experience,” either for land seeking or escaping from a particular event. The second reflects the people of Israel’s close attachment to tradition. The last is the migration that reflects the Christian understanding of the future, redemption, and salvation.¹⁵

For the first example, consider the case of Abraham in Genesis 12:1–4: “Go from your country, your people, and your father’s household to the land I will show you.” In this verse, it is possible to see a narrative of migration, where obedience to God requires abandoning one’s house, family, and identity and becoming a stranger in a foreign land. In order to do so, Abraham showed not only obedience but also faith, as he entered a stage of being an immigrant, which meant vulnerability and uncertainty about the future. Abraham’s vulnerability should deepen our empathy toward people today and enable us to see their concerns. Ultimately, Abraham’s migration reframes the identity of God’s people as those who are called to live as “strangers,” suggesting that faith itself involves a willingness to embrace mobility, dependence on God, and solidarity with migrants in society.¹⁶

One of the biggest examples in the Old Testament is the people of Israel in Egypt, living as migrants in an oppressive environment. Migration was the main theme or element for the people of Israel. The Israelites’ experience in Egypt provides a fundamental biblical framework for understanding migration. As foreigners, the people endured oppression and forced labor, and that experience was embodied in their memory. Later, God freed the Israelites from the slavery and oppression of the Egyptians. God is the one who commanded justice through the prophets. God commanded not just “charity but justice.” Jeremiah 22:16 says, “He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well... declares the LORD.” By sending Jesus to establish his kingdom on earth, the kingdom of God provided salvation and liberation. This is presented nowadays in Latin America and throughout the world, where there is pain, injustice, and hunger. And Jesus’ life extended to a “political dimension” by opposing the “major power groups of his society.”¹⁷

In the New Testament, one can find the example of Jesus’ own family, who sought refuge in another country. Matthew 2:13–15 says, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt.” Craig Keener explains that the family was forced to escape due to the threat posed by Herod, a leader known for possessing a “paranoid and jealous” mind. As with many people today, Jesus’ family experienced forced migration, a necessary act of survival; this situates Jesus as the embodied figure of a refugee displaced by injustice and oppression. Jesus reflects a pattern of vulnerability and exile that echoes the realities faced by displaced persons

¹⁴ Frank Mathwig, “Theological and Ethical Reflections on Migration,” Evangelical Reformed Church of Switzerland, January 24, 2024, <https://www.eks-eers.ch/en/blogpost/theological-and-ethical-reflections-on-migration/>.

¹⁵ Mathwig, “Theological and Ethical Reflections on Migration.”

¹⁶ Timothy F. Simpson, “The Politics of Immigration: Genesis 12:1–4a,” Political Theology Network, March 10, 2014, <https://politicaltheology.com/the-politics-of-immigration-genesis-121-4a/>.

¹⁷ Arthur F. McGovern in *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics*, eds., Norman K Gottwald and Richard A Horsley (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 75–78.

today, underscoring the ethical responsibility of believers to respond with compassion toward migrants and refugees.¹⁸

Migration can be found in several Old Testament passages as a legal-ethical category, expressed through law and the command to love. One clear example appears in Leviticus 19:33–34: “The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born.” This command is rooted in Israel’s own history of living as strangers in Egypt, indicating that it was not optional but an obligation for the entire community. Furthermore, it reflects a broader theological vision in which love for the neighbor, including the immigrant, must be practiced regardless of the condition or background of those who come to live among them.¹⁹

The migration of the Israelites played a central role in shaping their understanding of God’s law and the command to love. Their experience as strangers in Egypt and as people continually on the move formed the basis for ethical instructions that emphasized compassion and justice. Deuteronomy 24:17–18 says, “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there.” These verses indicate that, because they had lived as outsiders, Israel was called to treat others, especially foreigners, with dignity and care. In this way, their history of migration is directly connected to a legal and moral framework grounded in love for the neighbor and responsibility toward those from different backgrounds.²⁰

Thus, migration as a theological issue can be found in both the Old and New Testaments. Hebrews 11:13–16 says, “Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.” Ephesians 2:19 says, “You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people.” And Revelation 7:9 shows multinational people gathered in salvation. Within the Wesleyan tradition, salvation is understood as a journey of transformation characterized by increasing love for God and neighbor, reinforcing the biblical image of believers as pilgrims moving toward a restored and eternal community. This perspective emphasizes that holiness is not static but a continual movement toward maturity in love, aligning with the vision of redeemed, multinational people gathered in God’s presence.²¹

Approach to the Missio Dei of the Church of the Nazarene

The concept of *missio Dei* refers to the understanding that mission originates in God rather than in the church, emphasizing that the church’s role is to participate in God’s redemptive work in the world. As articulated by the Wycliffe Global Alliance, mission is rooted in the nature of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who actively sends and works for the reconciliation of creation. Therefore, the church does not possess an independent mission but is invited to join in with what God is already doing, situating all

¹⁸ Craig S. Keener, “Jesus Was a Refugee—Matthew 2:13–15,” Bible Backgrounds, May 25, 2020, <https://craigkeener.com/jesus-was-a-refugee-matthew-213-15/>.

¹⁹ “Immigration, Leviticus 19:34 and the Four Spheres Doctrine,” Rephidim Project, February 9, 2026, <https://www.rephidimproject.org/immigration-leviticus-1934-and-the-four-spheres-doctrine/>.

²⁰ “Connecting People of Other Cultures with Jesus,” Heartlight, 2026, https://www.heartlight.org/articles/202206/20220616_othercultures.html.

²¹ “Wesleyan-Holiness Theology,” Asbury University, <https://www.asbury.edu/about/wesleyan-holiness-theology/>; “The Wesleyan Holiness Tradition,” Azusa Pacific University, 2026, <https://www.apu.edu/wesleyan-holiness-tradition/index.html>.

Christian mission within a broader theological framework centered on God's initiative, purpose, and global redemptive plan.²²

The Church of the Nazarene, at some point, combines these three types of migration into its mission and also respects the concept and purpose of the *missio Dei*. Missionaries are a kind of migrant, and they also bring the message. The mission of the Church of the Nazarene was, at one point, to "get souls saved and sanctified." Initially, the methods of evangelism were the same in every country: house-to-house, Bible classes, and literature production and distribution. Missionary "migrants" shared the gospel in a country different from their own. They cared for people who were sick or illiterate. Their practices were holistic.²³

In Peru, a notable example is Roger Winans. On November 1, 1914, Winans arrived at the port of Pacasmayo with his wife, Mary Hunt. When they arrived in Peru, Roger had to work teaching English and selling Bibles. Mary sold bread. With the money they earned, they were able to pay the rent and buy food. Roger saved enough to buy wood for benches for the church that he started in Pacasmayo.²⁴

While in Peru, his house was burned with all his books, he was beaten after he preached on the street, and even at one time, someone tied a handkerchief in a noose around his neck. "Someone kindly disposed to cut the handkerchief just in time to save his life," Castañeda recorded.²⁵ As well, his first two spouses died due to diseases prevalent in the country.

It is important to remember that by the time Winans began his missionary service, he was not officially appointed by the Church of the Nazarene. His call was stronger than the lack of acceptance by the church. After ten years of service in Pacasmayo, Chiclayo, Chepén, and Monsefú, Winans started his journey into the jungle, where he felt called by God to serve. Through Winans, the Church of the Nazarene reached the never-before-evangelized Aguarunas. Strength, piety, and heroism characterized his ministry.²⁶

This is the side of the story brought by missionary migrants. They came with a purpose. What happens to those who are sometimes rejected, who came not with a purpose to evangelize but as part of the mission of God? Do they also participate in the active redemptive work?

One example of a massive migration and their work in the countries they visit is the Filipinos. The study by Fides Del Castillo highlights how migration becomes a significant context for understanding *missio Dei* through the lived experiences of Filipino Christian migrant workers. Rather than viewing mission as limited to formal structures, the article emphasizes that migrants themselves act as agents of God's mission, embodying faith in

²² Eddie Arthur, "Missio Dei and the Mission of the Church," Wycliffe Global Alliance, <https://www.wycliffe.net/what-we-do/articles-for-further-reflection/missio-dei-and-the-mission-of-the-church/>.

²³ Floyd T. Cunningham et al, *Our Watchword and Song: The Centennial History of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2009), 245, 248, 253-255.

²⁴ Dickerman, *The Call of the Aguaruna*, 13.

²⁵ Amy N. Hinshaw, *Native Torch Bearers* (Kansas, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1934), 152; Winans, *Gospel Over the Andes*, 152, 153.

²⁶ "96 Años de la Llegada de Roger Winans y Mary Hunt al Perú," *Iglesia del Nazareno del Peru*, <http://www.musicaperuana.com/nazareno/index4.htm>, translated by the author; Ethel King Dickerman, *The Call of the Aguaruna* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1967), 10.

everyday life across diverse cultural settings. Their experiences reveal that participation in God's mission is shaped by personal faith, life goals, and encounters with God's presence, demonstrating that mission emerges from the margins and is expressed through ordinary believers. In this way, migration is not only a social reality but also a theological space where God's mission is actively lived out in global and cross-cultural contexts.²⁷

The article "Immigrants and the True Story," from *Missio Dei Communities*, presents immigration within the broader biblical narrative as part of God's unfolding redemptive story. The article emphasizes that Scripture portrays God's mission as encompassing all peoples, in which movement across cultures and borders becomes a means by which God advances his purposes. Rather than viewing immigrants as outsiders, the narrative reframes them as participants in God's story, contributing to the formation of a diverse and reconciled community. In this perspective, migration is not incidental but integral to God's mission, inviting believers to embody hospitality, inclusion, and active participation in the restoration of all things.²⁸

People's perspectives on migration outside the church differ; not many see it as part of the *missio Dei*. People see problems with immigrants; they do not see the purpose in the kingdom of God. Though good people are entering and seeking new opportunities, there are also people causing trouble in cities or even in the houses that gave them opportunities. This has created the rejection of Venezuelan migrants by many Peruvians, including Christians. The government in Peru has granted several benefits to Venezuelans, including recognition of their college degrees, access to government insurance, education for children, and other benefits. Some people take this as the government taking advantage of the tax-paying citizens. Additionally, after two years of legal status, foreigners can vote in elections and are likely to vote for the party that granted them benefits. More migrants are now entering Latin America, with countries receiving people from Haiti, Ecuador, and, most recently, Cuba.

There are different reactions toward the Venezuelan exodus and other nationalities. When foreigners enter a country that is not their own, they should respect it. Some Venezuelans cause trouble, which upsets the locals and creates xenophobic reactions. According to Luis Rodriguez, an accredited Venezuelan journalist, "The presence of Venezuelans who are causing problems in Peruvian territory is part of [former President] Nicolás Maduro's strategy to bring a bad reputation to those who are running away from his government."²⁹ The reasons may vary. However, nothing justifies the behavior. Social media helps to propagate negative news, contributing to the non-acceptance of foreigners and the closing of doors to hospitality.

Hospitality in the Church as Part of the Imago Dei in the Missio Dei

The practice of hospitality in cross-cultural ministry is presented as a central expression of the gospel, extending beyond mere friendliness to a transformative way of relating to others. As Benjamin D. Espinoza argues, Christian hospitality reflects God's own redemptive activity, in which God continually invites, welcomes, and restores humanity. In this sense, ministry is not limited to teaching doctrine but involves creating spaces of mutual

²⁷ Fides Del Castillo, "Missio Dei: Perspectives from Filipino Christian Migrant Workers," *Practical Theology*, published online March 4, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2025.2608473>.

²⁸ "Immigrants and the True Story," *Missio Dei Communities*, January 13, 2019, <https://missiodeicommunities.com/missio-mesa-blog/2019/1/13/immigrants-and-the-true-story>.

²⁹ Luis Rodriguez, "Venezolanos que Causan Problemas en Perú son Enviados de Maduro," trans. By the author, *Andina*, <https://andina.pe/agencia/noticia-venezolanos-causan-problemas-peru-son-enviados-maduro-724368.aspx>.

sharing, learning, and inclusion across cultural boundaries. True hospitality challenges cultural assumptions, embraces humility, and recognizes the dignity of all people, reflecting the biblical command to welcome the stranger as part of God's ongoing mission in the world.³⁰

In "We Are All Immigrants! *Imago Dei*, Citizenship, and the Im/Possibility of Hospitality," Claudio Carvalhaes argues that immigration must be understood theologically through the doctrine of the *Imago Dei*, which affirms that all human beings bear God's image regardless of legal or national status. Carvalhaes challenges modern notions of citizenship that prioritize borders and documentation over human dignity, suggesting that Christian identity transcends national belonging. In this framework, all people are, in a sense, migrants journeying toward their ultimate home in God and thus share a common identity that calls for mutual recognition and care. Consequently, hospitality is not optional but a radical ethical demand rooted in the gospel, requiring believers to resist exclusionary practices and to embrace others as equal participants in God's creation.³¹

Previously, the concept of hospitality and its importance to the church today were discussed, with examples from the Old and New Testaments and other Christian perspectives. I demonstrated the reasons and importance of sharing hospitality toward strangers by narrating their conditions. However, after what was presented, what are we doing as a church or as Christians? Are we just mere repeaters of Scripture with no action? To answer those questions, I interviewed people, particularly from the Church of the Nazarene in Peru and other countries, as well as missionaries serving in different fields in Asia. They helped me to understand the real situation. Names are changed, since this helped them to share their thoughts without feeling judged.

Hernan is a Peruvian economist and a member of the Church of the Nazarene in Peru. His job consists of assisting people at risk, children in vulnerable situations, and related matters. He decided to create a refuge for Venezuelan migrants, El Buen Samaritano. He presented a proposal to the church board, which included private finances. The proposal was rejected. Hernan says, "No somos una iglesia con alma social, somos una iglesia amante de la liturgia y las formas conductuales." [We are not a church with a social spirit; we are a church that loves liturgy and forms.] This is a tension between contextualization and fidelity.

Javier, a Venezuelan Nazarene pastor, describes the Venezuelan exodus in three stages. The first stage was the one made by professionals, those who migrated, desperate for a new opportunity; they used their savings to migrate. The second movement was done by middle-class Venezuelans, seeking opportunities. They took every opportunity to get some financial aid and send it to their country. The third one is the one made by people who had just finished high school, with no profession; they gathered with friends and decided to leave. This last group is the one, according to Javier, that is causing problems and chaos in Peru.

Javier says that some churches are responding by providing shelter and food, but only to those who can prove that they are Christians. There are churches in Peru where more than half of the congregation is foreign, causing different feelings among the locals. The reason is

³⁰ Benjamin D. Espinoza, "Practicing the Welcoming Gospel: Hospitality in Cross-Cultural Ministries," *Missio Nexus*, October 1, 2014, <https://missionexus.org/uncategorized/practicing-the-welcoming-gospel-hospitality-in-cross-cultural-ministries/>.

³¹ Cláudio Carvalhaes, "We Are All Immigrants! *Imago Dei*, Citizenship, and the Im/Possibility of Hospitality," *Practical Matters Journal* 11 (2018). https://www.academia.edu/37430688/We_Are_All_Immigrants_Imago_Dei_Citizenship_and_The_I_m_Possibility_of_Hospitality1.

that they are the ones who will decide the future of the church. Javier also says that the support is mostly coming from the government, through entities, or NGOs.

Conclusions

The biblical and theological reflection on migration and hospitality demonstrates that migration is not merely a social or political issue but a central element within the *missio Dei*. From Abraham to Israel, and ultimately in Jesus, Scripture presents movement, displacement, and encounter with the “stranger” as spaces where God reveals his redemptive purposes. The Wesleyan perspective further reinforces that hospitality is not passive but relational and incarnational, calling believers to engage actively with others. Therefore, hospitality emerges as a non-optional expression of the gospel, rooted in love, justice, and the recognition of the *Imago Dei* in every person, regardless of origin or status.

However, the lived experiences within the church reveal a gap between theological affirmation and practical application. While some efforts exist, hospitality is often limited, selective, or conditioned, reflecting broader social tensions, fear, and cultural resistance. The testimonies presented highlight both the challenges and opportunities facing the church today: to move beyond rhetoric into embodied practice. In this context, migrants are not only recipients of care but active participants in God’s mission, challenging the church to recover its calling as a community of radical inclusion, compassion, and transformative presence in a world marked by displacement and division.

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